

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A composition based on zirconium oxide comprising cerium oxide in an atomic ratio Zr/Ce > 1, and in addition comprising lanthanum oxide and an oxide of a rare earth other than cerium and lanthanum, the composition having a sulphur content below 200 ppm, wherein after calcination for 6 hours at 1150°C it has a specific surface of at least 10 m²/g.

18. (Currently Amended) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein after calcination for 6 hours at 1150°C it the composition has a specific surface of at least 15 m²/g.

19. (Currently Amended) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein after calcination for 6 hours at 1200°C it the composition has a specific surface of at least 3 m²/g.

20. (Currently Amended) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein after calcination for 6 hours at 900°C it the composition has a specific surface of at least 50 m²/g.

21. (Currently Amended) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein after calcination for 6 hours at 1000°C ~~it~~ the composition has a specific surface of at least 40 m²/g.

22. (Previously Presented) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein the rare earth is neodymium.

23. (Previously Presented) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein the contents by weight of oxides are at least 50% for zirconium, less than 50% for the oxide of cerium, 5% at most for lanthanum and 15% at most for the rare earth.

24. (Currently Amended) The composition as claimed in claim 17, ~~being~~ sulfur-free having a sulphur content below 100 ppm.

25. (Withdrawn) A method of preparation of a composition as claimed in claim 17, comprising the steps of:

- a) preparing a mixture comprising compounds of cerium, of lanthanum and of the aforementioned rare earth and a sol of a zirconium compound;
- b) adding to the mixture of step a) a solution of a basic compound whereby a precipitate is obtained;
- c) heating said precipitate in an aqueous medium; and
- d) calcining the precipitate thus obtained in step c).

26. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the sol of a zirconium compound of step a) is obtained by heat treatment of an aqueous solution of a zirconium oxychloride.

27. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein the sol of a zirconium compound of step a) is obtained by the action of nitric acid on a hydroxide or carbonate of zirconium in a molar ratio NO_3^-/Zr between 1.7 and 2.3 in the case of a hydroxide and 1.7 and 2 in the case of a carbonate.

28. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein in step c) the precipitate is heated at a temperature of at least 100°C.

29. (Withdrawn) The method as claimed in claim 25, wherein in step c) the heating of the precipitate is carried out at basic pH.

30. (Previously Presented) A catalytic system, comprising a composition as defined in claim 17.

32. 31. (Withdrawn - Currently Amended) A method of treatment of the exhaust gases of internal combustion engines, comprising the step of treating said gases with a catalytic system as claimed in claim 30 or a composition as claimed in claim 17.

32. (New) The composition as claimed in claim 17, wherein the composition comprises a solid solution of the cerium oxide, the lanthanum oxide, and the oxide of the other rare earth, in the zirconium oxide.

33. (New) The composition as claimed in claim 32, wherein the zirconium oxide is crystallized in a cubic or quadratic system.

34. (New) The composition as claimed in claim 23, wherein the contents by weight of oxides are at least 70% for zirconium, at most 25% for cerium, 1% to 3% for lanthanum, and 3%-10% for the other rare earth.